

"Consumer alert"

For a copy of **Consumer Product Safety Commission's** (CPSC) "consumer alert" on disposing of decorative artificial fireplace ash that contains cancer-causing asbestos, write to CPSC, Washington, DC 20207, or call the toll-free hotline: 800-638-2666 (Maryland residents only should call 800-492-2937). The instructions for disposal of non-burning artificial fireplace logs, gas-burning fireplace logs and ashes containing asbestos are quite detailed, so be sure you follow the procedures outlined in the "alert." CPSC estimates that in the past 10 years from 300,000 to 500,000 consumers have bought artificial fireplace ash.

Consumer Law Training Center is making available (at cost) a consumer fraud comic book which describes unscrupulous sales tactics of some vocational training schools and illustrates the dangers of buying from door-to-door salespersons. The cost for 25-500 copies is 5¢ each; 501-999 copies, 4¢ each; or more than 1,000, 3¢ each. Write Consumer Law Training Center, New York Law School, 57 Worth St., New York, NY 10013.

Recalls

▪ **SMOKE DETECTORS—BRK Electronics**, in cooperation with the **Consumer Product Safety Commission** (CPSC), has issued a second notice of the recall of all BRK SS749 series smoke detectors manufactured before Sept. 26, 1975. The first notice of this recall was issued Jan. 25, but between 85,000 and 90,000 of these smoke detectors have not been located.

The recall was begun voluntarily by BRK when the company discovered that improper components were used in the SS749 series smoke detectors produced from March 1974 to Sept. 26, 1975, making these units inoperable and under certain circumstances causing a fire inside a detector. Although the detector is enclosed in self-extinguishing plastic, the units are being recalled as a precautionary measure.

According to BRK, all distributors who purchased the detectors have been contacted and with the company's help have been notifying contractors who installed the detectors to organize factory supervised replacement programs.

The units subject to this recall are 110 volt AC-powered detectors which sold for a suggested retail price of \$39.95. No battery-powered detectors are involved. Some models were manufactured with ordinary power cords (line cord) which plug into wall outlets, and others have pigtail leads (hard wire) for installation directly into electric wiring. The

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consumer news

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
Office of Consumer Affairs

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Consumer agency—an update

A proposal for reorganization of 26 Federal Government units and a report by the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs on current shortcomings with public participation at regulatory agency proceedings highlight the latest developments concerning the proposed consumer protection agency.

The reorganization plan was submitted in the form of a letter from the **Office of Management and Budget** (OMB) to Congressional leaders, and lists existing or budgeted Federal consumer offices scattered throughout Government which could be consolidated into one consumer agency if Congress approves legislation creating the single agency.

The 26 consumer offices which would be combined under the plan presently employ some 200 people and spend a total of \$11.6 million annually—resources that would become available for the consumer agency.

In addition, President Carter will direct executive agencies and departments to rescind the Consumer Representation Plans drawn up by the previous administration—an action that will make an additional \$8.5 million available.

Inasmuch as the first year budget for the proposed consumer agency would be \$15 million, and more than \$20 million would be freed under this reorganization, OMB concludes that a single consumer agency could not only conduct more efficient consumer representation activities, but would create a savings for taxpayers as well.

Esther Peterson, Special Assistant to the President for Consumer Affairs, said the proposed reorganization "will answer charges of some opponents of the bill that the new agency will create more bureaucracy at increased cost."

COMMITTEE REPORT

The latest installment of the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs' report on public participation at agency proceedings has been released, and concludes that public interest representation at agency proceedings is greatly outweighed by participation from industry. The report states: "At agency after agency, participation by the regulated industry predominates—often overwhelmingly. Organized public interest representation accounts for a very small percentage of participation before Federal regulatory agencies."

"The single greatest obstacle to active public participation in regulatory proceedings," the report continues, "is the lack of financial resources by potential participants to meet the great costs of formal participation. Lack of funds has prevented public participation in many important proceedings." As a result, consumer interests are often seriously underrepresented.

In its report the Committee says that "the proposed consumer agency would be one of the major remedies for that underrepresentation," and recommends that an independent, nonregulatory consumer agency be created to "supplement the efforts of the private consumer groups and enhance the ability of the regulatory agencies to regulate in the public interest."

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detectors were marketed by BRK, American Machine & Foundry (AMF), I-T-E Imperial Corporation (I-T-E) and Sears, Roebuck & Co. (Sears). They have the following model numbers:

BRK	SS749AC	(hard wire)
	SS749ACS	(hard wire)
	SS749L	(line cord)
	SS749SL	(line cord)
AMF	2000AC	(hard wire)
	2000ACL	(line cord)
I-T-E	IT01-AC	(hard wire)
Sears	9-57049	(hard wire)
	9-57047	(line cord)
	9-57048	(line cord)

Homeowners who suspect they have one of these smoke detectors are urged to check the model number on their units. (Caution: Before inspecting hard-wired detectors, electrical power to the unit must be turned off at the fuse box or circuit breaker; line cord detectors must be unplugged before inspection). Once the power is off, remove the cover and examine the side of the plastic base for a label which contains the model number.

Anyone who has one of the Sears units affected by this recall should contact the nearest Sears store, which will arrange for inspection and free replacement of the unit containing the defect.

People who believe they have any of the other detectors under recall should contact BRK to obtain a fact sheet, which gives specific information for identifying potentially defective units, as well as replacement instructions.

Additional information can be obtained by contacting BRK Electronics, 780 McClure Ave., Aurora, IL 60507, Attention: Dennis W. Clair; or by calling 312-898-9040 collect. Ask for the Project 749 Dept.

- In a related recall, Master Lock Co., Milwaukee, WI—along with CPSC—has announced a voluntary recall of approximately 32,000 "Master" number 2551 battery-operated smoke alarms and number 2553 dual-powered smoke alarms made late in 1975 and part of 1976.

The recalled smoke alarms can be identified by the following serial numbers: 1 to 10,000; 17,735 to 20,000 and 2,000,001 to 2,020,000. The serial number is located on the back cover of the smoke alarm under the mounting bracket.

Some of the units may fail to alarm when the relative humidity in the home is over 70%. Other units may not be sensitive enough to alarm at minimum levels. The company has received one complaint from a consumer who noticed an alarm did not function properly during a routine test.

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Federal, state and local agencies assist older Americans

Administration on Aging (AoA) has compiled the following information on existing government programs to assist the elderly, including details on how applications should be made, and where further information can be obtained.

While Federal agencies in Washington are glad to furnish information, interested persons will save time by dealing directly with state or local agencies on aging. A list of state agencies on aging is available from Administration on Aging, Washington, DC 20201.

INCOME SUPPLEMENTS AND JOBS

Persons who have been employed long enough in jobs covered by Social Security are eligible, of course, for monthly cash benefits. Also, under the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program, persons aged 65 or older, as well as blind and disabled people with limited income and resources, may receive Federal payments. SSI benefits, when combined with other income (if any), will usually give an individual a minimum monthly income of \$167.80, and a couple, \$251.80. SSI takes the place of the previous old-age assistance program, which was administered through state and county departments of public welfare or social services. Some states that were paying higher benefits than those provided under SSI are supplementing the Federal payments to maintain their previous benefit levels. Application for both Social Security benefits and SSI assistance should be made at local **Social Security Administration (SSA)** offices (usually listed in the telephone book under US Government).

Older persons seeking employment may be able to participate in one of several Federally sponsored job programs. The major **Labor Dept.** effort in behalf of older workers is the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), which employs economically disadvantaged persons aged 55 and older in part-time community service jobs paying an average of about \$2.50 per hour. SCSEP participants work in day-care centers, schools, hospitals facilities for the handicapped, senior citizen centers, nutrition programs, and beautification, conservation, and restoration projects. In addition to wages, the workers receive yearly physical examinations, personal and job-related counseling, job training, and in some cases placement in regular unsubsidized jobs.

Also, older persons may be helped through the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) of 1973, which offers help to the economically disadvantaged, underemployed, and unemployed of all ages to compete for, secure, and hold jobs. To apply, contact the office designated to run the CETA program locally—this may be called the Manpower Office, the Human Development or Human Resources Department, or the Employment and Training Administration.

Information about both of these programs can be obtained from Labor Dept. Washington, DC 20210, or from its regional offices in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, Kansas City (MO) Denver, San Francisco, or Seattle. Other excellent sources of information about these and other jobs for the elderly are state employment services which serve everyone, free and without obligation. The local telephone directory usually contains the address of the nearest office.

FOOD AND NUTRITION

Through the national Nutrition Program for Older Americans, low-cost meals and related social services are being provided to many people 60 and over (and their spouses of any age) who need such assistance. Most meals are provided in group settings, such as schools, community centers, churches, and public housing. Under some circumstances, meals can be home-delivered. Information about such programs is available from the

Administration on Aging, Washington, DC 20201, or from the state or local agency on aging.

Low-income individuals (including the elderly) and families may obtain emergency food and other supplies and services through nearly 1,000 local community action agencies. These benefits are provided under several programs, including Community Food and Nutrition (CFN) and Senior Opportunities and Services (SOS), administered nationally by the **Community Services Administration (CSA)**. Special arrangements are made to assist migrants and native Americans. The address and phone number of the local community action agency can be obtained through the offices of city mayors or county commissioners.

Also, many low-income, elderly persons can stretch their incomes with food stamps—the food coupons that are used like money at the grocery store and are obtained from the Government for less than face value. An individual need not be receiving assistance payments to qualify for food stamps. Information about the program can be obtained from the state or area agency on aging or local departments of social services, human resources, or welfare.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Medicare and Medicaid are two programs that help many older persons with medical bills. Nearly all persons 65 years and older are eligible for Medicare, while needy, low-income elderly persons may also be eligible for Medicaid. Medicare is a Federal program that is uniform throughout the country; Medicaid is a Federal-state partnership under which benefits vary from state to state. Anyone 65 or older and entitled to Social Security or railroad retirement is automatically covered under Medicare's basic hospital insurance plan (Part A). The supplemental medical insurance plan (Part B) of Medicare is voluntary; to participate, the eligible persons must enroll in the plan. Information on Medicare is available from the local SSA office.

Low-income older persons may also be eligible for Medicaid, whether or not they are enrolled under the Medicare or SSI program. For senior citizens not eligible under Medicare, Medicaid helps pay for a wide variety of hospital and other medical services. For elderly persons already enrolled in Medicare, Medicaid often pays for services not covered by Medicare, such as eyeglasses, dental care, prescribed drugs, and long term nursing home care. Information on Medicaid can be obtained from local social services or welfare offices or from state or local agencies on aging.

HOW TO FIND HELP

AoA was set up by Congress to administer programs for the elderly and implement national policies in the Older Americans Act of 1965. AoA is part of **Health, Education, and Welfare Dept. (HEW)**. To effectively carry out these policies and programs, agencies on aging have been designated in each state and in many communities. These agencies serve as advocates for older Americans and coordinate activities in their behalf.

The agencies on aging can supply information about the programs described here—Social Security, SSI, food stamps, meals, Medicare, Medicaid, and jobs—and can often help older persons interpret requirements for eligibility and help them contact the proper agencies. The agencies on aging also advise and inform the elderly about housing, transportation, counseling, homemaker-home health aide, legal, and other important services. A special goal of the AoA (and the agencies throughout the country) is to help older Americans remain independent in their homes in comfort and safety—as long as possible—by providing needed services.

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Recalls (Continued from page 2)

Consumers who own "Master" smoke alarms with the above serial numbers should write: Master Lock Co., 2600 N 32nd St., Milwaukee, WI 53210, Attention: Dept. 16. Include name, address and telephone number along with serial number of the alarm.

The company will send a form detailing return instructions. The units will either be replaced or corrected, depending on the problem, without cost to the consumer.

For additional information call the CPSC toll-free hotline 800-638-2666. Maryland residents call 800-492-2937.

HELMET FASTENERS—National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has issued a warning to motorcyclists about the safety of 57,000 "Saf-T-Release" helmet fasteners manufactured by F.P., Inc. of Pasadena, CA.

The fasteners have been recalled by the manufacturer because a potentially defective coil spring may allow them to open under impact, permitting the helmets to come off.

The warning to motorcyclists was issued because the manufacturer does not have a record of the names and addresses of purchasers to notify individually by mail.

NHTSA opened an investigation in 1975 after receiving an allegation that a cyclist had been killed when his helmet strap—with a Saf-T-Release fastener—failed.

NHTSA testing found that helmets fitted with the Saf-T-Release fastener failed to pass retention tests designed to measure the holding strength of the chin strap. The recalled fasteners were manufactured between 1969 and 1975.

F.P., Inc., will replace at no charge the recalled fasteners with fasteners of a newer design. A cyclist who has a Saf-T-Release fastener should remove the fastener from the helmet and send it, along with name and address, to F.P., Inc., PO Box 5295, Pasadena, CA 91107. Cyclists will receive replacement fasteners by return mail.

Public participation

Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has published guidelines explaining public participation and compensation for participation at rulemaking proceedings [See **CONSUMER REGISTER**: July 15]. The guidelines appear in 2 pamphlets: *Rulemaking and Public Participation under the FTC Improvement Act*, and *Applying for Reimbursement for FTC Rulemaking Participation*.

Copies of the guidelines may be obtained from the Public Reference Branch, Room 130, Federal Trade Commission, Washington, DC 20580; phone 202-523-3598.

Food supply

Agriculture Dept. has released the following food supply information for this month. Agriculture describes food supply as plentiful when supply exceeds requirements, adequate when food supply is sufficient to meet needs, and light when supplies are not expected to meet needs.

MEAT

Beef—plentiful; pork—adequate.

POULTRY AND EGGS

Broiler-fryers—adequate; turkey—adequate; eggs—adequate.

MILK AND DAIRY PRODUCTS

Milk and dairy products—plentiful.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Fresh peaches—plentiful; plums—plentiful; nectarines—plentiful; Bartlett pears—adequate; grapes—plentiful; dried prunes—adequate; oranges—adequate; lemons—plentiful; limes—light; corn—plentiful; frozen potatoes—plentiful; fresh potatoes—adequate.

GRAINS AND LEGUMES

Rice—plentiful; wheat—plentiful; dry beans—adequate.

S-p-r-e-a-d-i-n-g the word

Insurance Information Institute has published an *Educator's Guide to Teaching Auto and Home Insurance* that is intended to help teachers improve the quality of instruction in auto and home insurance. Single copies of the guide are available without charge by writing to Educational Relations, Insurance Information Institute, 110 William St., New York, NY 10038.

Aging (Continued from page 3)

An individual can ask his or her state agency for help and also find out how to contact the nearest area agency on aging. Refer to the state agency list available from AoA (described earlier).

Of course, not all older persons have critical problems. Many would like to volunteer to serve their communities, or wish to learn of recreational, social, and educational activities and opportunities. The state and area agencies on aging can assist these persons also.

Millions of US children not immunized

There are 20 million children in this country under the age of 14 who are not fully immunized against polio, measles, rubella, mumps, diphtheria, pertussis (whooping cough) and tetanus. A nationwide drive to make sure these children are protected is under way through **Health, Education and Welfare Dept.'s (HEW) Center for Disease Control (CDC)** in Atlanta.

According to Dr. Alan Hinman, Director, Immunization Division, Bureau of State Services at CDC, part of the problem is that too many people think these diseases are threats of the past and no longer pose a problem. He told **CONSUMER NEWS**, "We have become complacent in the absence of the devastating polio epidemics of the 1950's and 1960's. The reason the past decade has not seen as severe an incidence of many of these childhood diseases is because immunization was successful. However, if we allow more and more children to remain unprotected it is likely we will see more and more outbreaks."

Dr. Hinman went on to say, "There is a whole generation of parents who have never seen a victim of polio and who are unaware of the iron lungs, the leg braces or the crippling effects of this dread disease."

Concerned parents of children who are entering kindergarten or first grade this fall should check with their family doctors to make sure immunizations are up to date. For those who do not have their own doctors and for those who cannot afford to pay for their children's shots, immunization will be made available without charge at local health departments, in schools, community centers or other easily accessible places.

Most states have laws requiring immunization for some of the diseases mentioned above, but unfortunately too many states do not enforce them.

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